



Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS

Issue 1/04

January 2004



Welcome efforts to improve the town's appearance: murals on the underpass beneath Bridge Road.

In this issue

Update on Strategic Plan for Maidenhead – John McIntosh

Regular features on talks, outings, the Heritage Centre, Projects and Planning

Visit our website! : www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

THE SOCIETY AND THE COMING YEAR

I have never been one to dwell too much on the past. In writing a piece for the Newsletter or indeed anything there is always a tendency to look back and then to repeat oneself. If you have read the Newsletter regularly over the past year you will have a very complete picture of the state of the Society, of its successes, however modest or not, of its needs and of its strengths and weaknesses.

Looking ahead, the major organisational task is to pick a new chairman since no one came forward at the AGM to take on the role. Given someone with the will there is a strong instrument for the pursuit of the many items on our agenda for encouraging improvements in the town. The development of the Strategic Review, of which more anon, has set out a blueprint for tackling these needs. But 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions' and we want to achieve at least some of the goals outlined in it in the not too distant future, for such targets as these are never attained quickly. Finding a new leader is thus a key step. Any suggestions?

With the change of administration at the elections the town hall redevelopment was cancelled. The need for improvements to the office accommodation, regrouping of staff and general updating of the facilities have not gone away and the new administration seems to be tackling them with sensitivity towards the wishes of the public. The Society's Planning Group is maintaining a close watch on what is currently under consideration by the Council. Their present thoughts are contained in the November issue of 'Around the Royal Borough' and your views are sought via a questionnaire in it. Do respond to it.

It is the Society's policy to engage the Council and its Officers constructively in pursuit of the Society's goals. A major step in this direction has been the recent nomination of Councillor Vicky Howes (Environment and Town Centre) as the liaison for the Society. This connection will be fostered by passing relevant papers to her, such as this Newsletter, the Executive's Agendas and Minutes etc. She is invited to attend such of our Executive meetings as she feels desirable and correspondingly we may invite her to specific meetings. Nothing happens instantaneously but we believe that with care and in time this new arrangement will improve the Society's performance markedly.

The Outings programme for the coming year is already planned in considerable degree and thanks to Shashi Dare a Talks programme through the period is under way. The major problem is identifying suitable speakers for suitable topics and we are trying to spread the load across the Executive. Making arrangements for the speakers to come to Maidenhead is relatively simple. If you have ideas for topics and for appropriate speakers do let Shashi know.

Now, I have said what seems important and relevant to me for the moment. Do please consider joining in our efforts. Just encouraging others to become members and to be active are positive moves.

John McIntosh

TALKS

WEDNESDAY 18th February 2004 – 8 p.m.

“TREKKING TO NEPAL”

An illustrated talk by Rudi Sheldon, which will describe aspects of the scenery and village life in Nepal.

WEDNESDAY 21ST April 2004 – 8 p.m.

We are trying to arrange a talk on “Aspects of Police Activity”.
The speaker has yet to be confirmed, so please keep an eye on the posters that we put up around the town.

AN OPERA FOR MAIDENHEAD

Whilst it is not our normal practice to give space in the Newsletter to promote local commercial activities, we make an exception in respect of the following:

“Margaret of Maidenhead” is a new opera, based along classical lines, which will be produced at Norden Farm from 13th to 17th July 2004. The main aims of the production are outlined in the constitution of the charitable community group responsible:

To celebrate the enlightened community of Maidenhead; to enhance the image of the town as a very pleasant place to live in; to involve many sectors of the community, including the audience, a wide range of age groups from junior school children to pensioners, as well as the Asian community of Maidenhead; to promote education, by amateurs working with professionals; by young children working on stage with adults; by introducing ‘opera’ as a form of entertainment to young children as well as adults who had not previously been attracted to opera; and to celebrate the arts wherever they flourish.

The setting is in well-known Maidenhead locations and the fictional story, which has a serious theme, has a happy ending. The idea for the opera came from Rudi Sheldon, a long time member of the Civic Society, who wrote the words and then worked closely with Tony Osborne who composed the score. The overall production will be under Robert Roscoe, conductor of the Windsor & Maidenhead Symphony Orchestra and also the Berkshire Youth Orchestra. Kay Lord is the Director. The performers include young professionals and local performers.

The opera is dedicated to the people of Maidenhead who have contributed to making it a lively and vibrant town. All very much in sympathy with aims of the Civic Society.

OUTINGS

Unfortunately our planned trip in December to Portsmouth Dockyard had to be cancelled due to lack of support. This is the first time for over 2 years that a trip has had to be postponed and we hope that we do receive the good level of interest in the future for our outings.

Our next trip is on Sunday March 28 to Woburn Abbey and Safari park in Bedfordshire. We have negotiated joint tickets to enable us to travel through the Safari Park and then to visit the Abbey.

After we have seen the large number of animals in a natural setting we will stop for coffee. The park contains elephants, rhino, hippo, monkeys, lions, tigers and many more. It is set in the 3000-acre grounds which house one of the largest and most varied collection of deer in the world.

When we visit the house we will wander over the three floors, which contain a wonderful collection of English and French furniture and works of art by Gainsborough, Canaletto, Reynolds and Van Dyck.

We will see their garden and be able to visit the 40 antique shops in the grounds. It promises to be a day of interest and contrasts to interest all ages.



The West Front, Woburn Abbey

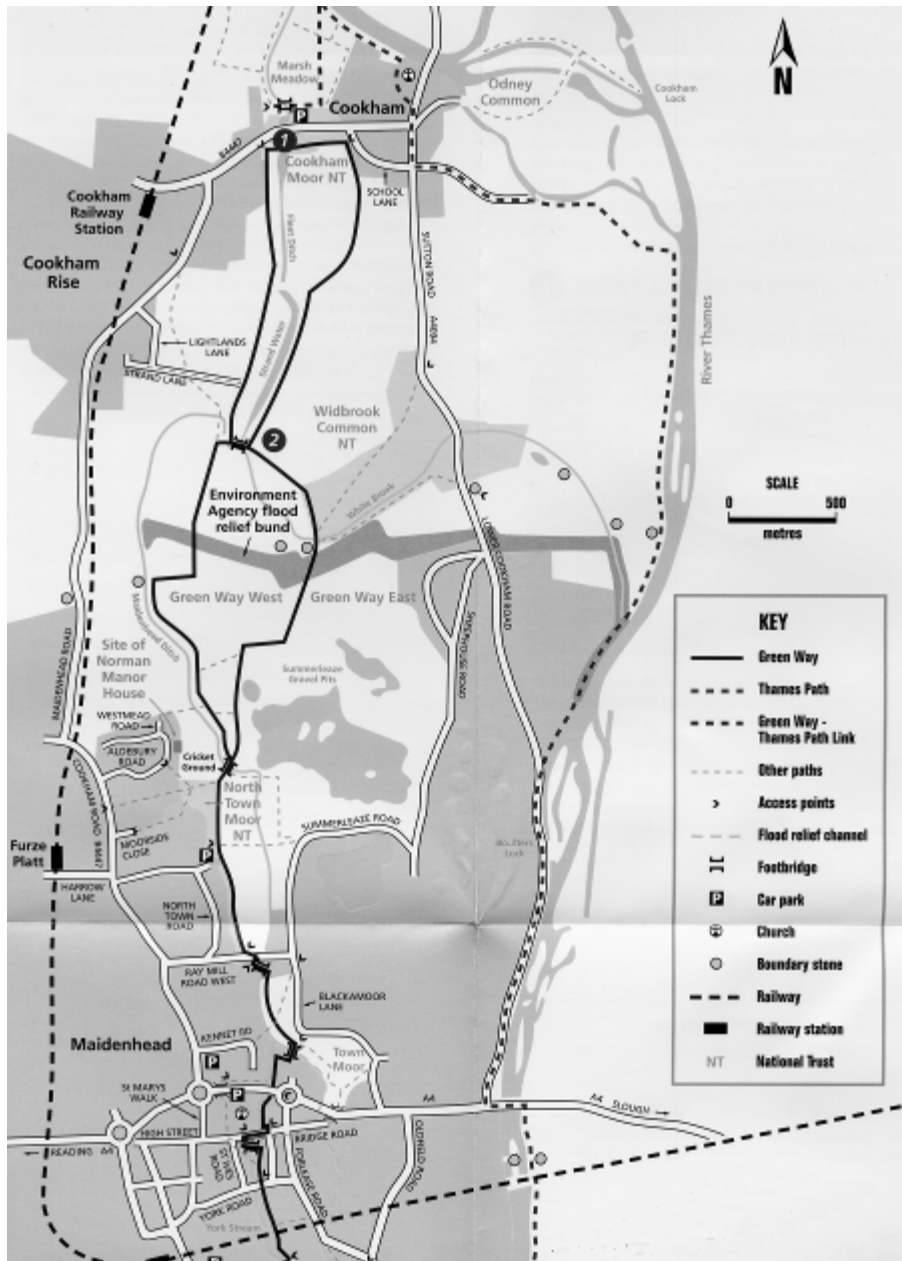
Our next planned outing will be in early June, when we may be visiting Knole House and Chartwell or Chiddingstone Castle.

Mike Copeland

PROJECTS

GREEN WAY/YORK STREAM

My prediction that water would reach the town centre of York Stream by the end of the year was almost correct. Water was still north of the flood control gate on 10 December 2003 (gate at west end of flood bund – see map) but the flow, if you can use such a word for standing water, had reached the old bridge east of North Town Moor by 5th January. Following heavy rain there is now water throughout the system including in the town centre.



Map of the Green Way (from RBWM leaflet)

It is worth pointing out that while the town centre section of York Stream was still dry, the White Brook and its ditches near to the Thames were full of water.



The White Brook east of the Lower Cookham Road, January 2004

Further inland the water depth at the sluice footbridge on the loop to the north west of the junction with Strand Water (see map) had been steadily increasing; as of 1st January measuring 70cms (28inches). However as this water flowed towards Maidenhead it was impeded by reeds/silt causing it to slowly disappear into the ground. No doubt the dry summer further aggravated the situation.

Unfortunately a representative of the Environment Agency who was to come and talk to the Maidenhead Town Forum on 22nd December about what they propose to do to improve matters was not able to attend at the last minute. However, the E.A. (on 5th January) has started to clear fallen trees in and near to the White Brook next to Quintain's land. This is the same land the Royal Borough has been offered at no cost (see below).

The work the E.A. is doing should force the issue of access onto Quintain's land. They have managed to get Landrovers and diggers onto the west bank of the White Brook by driving along the flood bund but so far have been unable to get any vehicle onto the east bank because they don't want to risk using the old bridge, lifted in last winters floods.

If they cannot find a way of getting mechanical help all the tree work will have to be done by hand which will take forever. They are supposed to finish by March to avoid the nesting season. They will also need access for machinery next autumn when they plan to dredge out this section of the White Brook.



Environment Agency personnel clearing trees near the White Brook



The White Brook before tree clearance, January 2004

All this is of great interest as we are currently raising money for a new bridge to get onto Quintain's land (see below). And, if you would like another prediction, it is that the water will disappear from the town centre in April.

MILLENNIUM WALK

Path from Lower Cookham Road to Towpath

Our proposed path would cross land next to the towpath currently owned by Quintain PLC which the Royal Borough has been offered at no cost. For those of you familiar with the towpath, this land is the area adjacent to the avenue of tall trees composed of many Dawn Redwoods, (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) from China. These trees were probably planted by Waldorf Astor, as this was once his land (similar trees occur on the Cliveden bank) and were probably planted to preserve his view from Cliveden. We have suggested that Quintain's land could be used as a nature reserve with public access and the Royal Borough has been considering this offer since July and has been trying to resolve the access problem. As noted above, we think the E.A. will have to deal with this problem in order to do their work which includes dredging out this section of the White Brook next August. While we await their decision we have continued to raise money for a new bridge. We are very grateful to the Prince Philip Trust for the recent offer of £2,000 towards the cost, which will be made available once it is clear the project will go ahead.

The existing bridge across the White Brook adjacent to Quintain's land, lifted in last winter's flood and therefore now unsafe.



A404: Marlow to Malders Lane Link

The Public Enquiry into the Secretary of State's orders to divert Footpath 9, Bisham, off the A404 was held on 5 and 6 November in the Town Hall. The orders were overwhelmingly supported by local people, many of whom spoke at the Enquiry. I outlined the Society's interest and our support of the proposals. The Inspector said her report should be available in one to two months. No news as of 13th January.

BOY AND THE BOAT STATUE

The remains of this statue are still at the top of the High Street. Publicity to try and find the missing arm has so far not borne fruit and it seems likely that the missing part will have to be re-made by Lydia Karpinska. We are in touch with the town centre manager about this.

Ann Darracott

HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

The Heritage Centre's website www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk is spreading news of our local history around the world. An increasing number of historical enquiries are being received by e-mail, and most recently orders for books have been received from Australia and Seattle, USA. The wonders of modern technology!

The Romans were pretty good in their day, as you can find out by visiting our exhibition ***The Romans in Maidenhead***, which is sponsored by Italian Continental Stores and runs until 13th March. On display are finds from Cox Green and Castle Hill villas, the Summerleaze area, the River Thames, Cookham Dean and Bray. The objects range from delicate jewellery to coins, tiles, a quorn stone and one of the hundreds of skeletons discovered near Fifield. The display for 'Skeleton 8', as he is officially known, has been sponsored by The Maidenhead Chiropractice; Dr Chris Turner kindly reassembled the box of bones which arrived from the Museum of Reading.

During the exhibition we are showing a video of the excavation of the villa at Cox Green, while children or grandchildren will enjoy dressing up in togas and cloaks or building a temple in wooden blocks. They will also enjoy a special ***Romans Activity Day*** we are holding during half term – on Saturday 21st February. There will be a morning and an afternoon session presented by Learning Through Action. Each session will end with the young legionnaires performing the 'tortoise' manoeuvre with cardboard shields; for further details please phone us on 01628 780555.

From 17th March to 15th May, you can surprise yourself by discovering that historic Maidenhead has not entirely disappeared. A new exhibition ***Maidenhead's Historic Buildings***, kindly Sponsored by Roger Preston & Partners, will concentrate on the 60-odd listed buildings to be found within the former Borough of Maidenhead. These range in date from the 15th to the 20th Centuries and from the well known (All Saints' Church and Maidenhead Bridge) to the less well known (a 1926 phone box and several milestones along the Bath Road).

Our researchers working on a new exhibition ***Summer on the River*** would particularly welcome the loan of any memorabilia or photographs relating to events on the river (regattas, swan-apping, etc) or to any of the hotels or boatyards which used to exist between Bray and Bourne End. Please contact us on 01628 780555 or info@maidenheadheritage.org.uk.

Maidenhead Heritage Centre is open Tuesday – Saturdays
90 Moorbridge Road, Maidenhead SL6 8BW, ☎ 01628 780555
www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk

PLANNING DIGEST

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Since the last Newsletter, the Planning Group has met and considered and responded to 22 planning applications.

- Nigel Cockburn

THE STRATEGIC REVIEW

In the last Newsletter I outlined the origins and ideas behind the Strategic Review and gave some picture of how it would be developed.

In the end there was a wealth of propositions under the ten headings. What we finished with was a combination of desirable objectives and a wish list. The next task was to reduce this to something more coherent and manageable. Thanks to John Ashford this has now been done and we have a document which if not final is at least of a form which the Executive will consider at the next meeting. It is rather too large to publish with this Newsletter but for those of you who are on the web you will find it in full on the Society's website at www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk; it is not possible to give all the contents but here are a few of the main topics. Remember that behind each there are quite specific and detailed targets.

HOUSING:- Maintain the existing balance of housing and plan for the provision of 'affordable housing', ensuring that commercial and residential provision is kept in balance, and all the time insisting on high standards of design. Emphasise the use of 'brownfield' sites and particularly ensure the provision of matching infrastructure e.g. schools, water, shops etc.

COMMERCE & INDUSTRY:- Seek to provide a wide diversity of shops and services particularly in the town centre and make access to them convenient, sociable and pleasant. Ensure that shops are available as part of local residential developments. Keep the town centre clean, quiet and safe and equally extend that to local shopping enclaves.

TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL:- Make travel by bus a viable alternative for travel into and around town. Further integrate rail and bus travel by making the station a transport hub and interchange. Also provide fully adequate car parking at the station and in town creating underground parking where surface and multi-storey sites cannot be contrived. Make a concerted effort to make cycling in and around town safe and convenient.

OPEN SPACES, PARKS & GARDENS:- Maintain the Green Belt and develop the parks and gardens already available while extending them by insisting on green spaces with every development. Press the Council to use its full authority to bring the York Stream up to the standard of being a clean, regular flow of water of adequate volume to fill its channel and cleanse itself throughout its length and particularly in the town. Equally to convince the Environment Agency to manage all flows of the local stream systems in a way consonant with appearance, water flow and the environment. Capitalise on the opportunities afforded by the town's riverside location to create walks and other facilities for the public.

ARTS, LIBRARY:- Develop the facilities for the performing arts such as refurbishing the Desborough Suite as a theatre complementary to Norden Farm. Support the provision of musical events in the town and their promoting organisations. Ensure that there is an adequate space in the town centre to house exhibitions of all kinds and particularly build on the success of the library for smaller meetings, exhibitions and as internet-café.

SPORTS & ACTIVE RECREATION:- Provide and develop facilities including existing ones to encourage sports such as football, walking, cycling, swimming etc particularly among the young starting with children at school.

HEALTH, SAFETY & AMBIENCE:- Improve these aspects by measures such as upgrading the whole area near the Town Hall and particularly Library square; rapid removal of any graffiti; attacking the deplorable habit of depositing chewing gum on pavements and removing present deposits; encouraging high standards of shop front design and their regular refreshing by painting etc.; ensuring that such standards are equally applied to the shopping enclaves around the town. Press for the highest possible levels of recycling of all waste and actively improve garden waste collection.

This is to be seen only as an interim account of the Review. By its nature it will go on being modified as new needs are seen and as present ones become less important. This summary is backed by a mass of detail, which provides the detailed tasks and actions needed to move towards the bigger targets. Everyone needs to become involved so, if you have put a thought into the review, do come forward and help achieve it.

- John McIntosh

OLDFIELD ROAD/BRIDGE AVENUE SITE

If you drive along the A4 into Maidenhead, you can't have missed the demolition of the industrial premises that once occupied this site on the corner of Oldfield Road. Work has been in progress for some time now, and is anticipated to be complete by the end of the month. There will then be a large, flat empty space until one of the various applications in respect of the re-development is approved.



Just the old office block left – January 2004

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 18th February 2004

Talk

“Trekking in Nepal”

Rudi Sheldon

Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

Sunday 28th March 2004

Outing

Woburn Abbey & Safari Park

Wednesday 21st April 2004

Talk

Possible talk on “Aspects of Police Activity”

(Speaker to be announced)

Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President	Richard Poad, Hollyhocks, The Common, Cookham Dean, SL6 9NZ	484298
Acting Chairman	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
Vice-Chairman	Vacancy	
Secretary	June Churchman, 20 Chiltern Road, SL6 1XA	638546
Asst. Secretary	Gillian Moore, 10 Langdale Close, SL6 1SY	630130
Treasurer	Trevor Farnfield, Ditton Meads, Winter Hill Road, SL6 6NS	638142
Membership Sec.	Shashi Dare, Silvretta, Islet Road, SL6 8LD	629976
Planning Group	Nigel Cockburn, Willow House, Fishery Road, SL6 1UN	621084
Outings Sec.	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	681955
Newsletter		
Distributor	Carol Innes, Contour, Briar Glen, Cookham Rise, SL6 9JP	532418

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2004

Parish Centre in St. Luke’s Church, at 7.45 p.m.

14th January, 11th February, 10th March, 14th April, 12th May, 9th June, 14th July, 8th September, 13th October, 10th November, 8th December.

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 17th November 2004 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 8.00pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 2nd April 2004.**

(Photographs taken by Ann & Brian Darracott using the Society’s digital camera purchased with a grant from the Kidwell’s Trust)

News Editor **Brian Darracott**
6 Medallion Place, Maidenhead, SL6 1TF (01628 620280)